

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 4, 2015

Susan Blank '15, Providing pulpit supply and seeking ordination in the PCUSA

SCRIPTURE

AMOS 5:1-17

1 Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:

2 Fallen, no more to rise,
is maiden Israel;
forsaken on her land,
with no one to raise her up.

3 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The city that marched out a thousand
shall have a hundred left,
and that which marched out a hundred
shall have ten left.

4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:
Seek me and live;

5 but do not seek Bethel,
and do not enter into Gilgal
or cross over to Beer-sheba;
for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
and Bethel shall come to nothing.

6 Seek the LORD and live,
or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,
and bring righteousness to the ground!

8 The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name,

9 who makes destruction flash out against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

11 Therefore because you trample on the poor

and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.

12 For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins —
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and push aside the needy in the gate.

13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;
for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.

15 Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord:
In all the squares there shall be wailing;
and in all the streets they shall say, "Alas! alas!"
They shall call the farmers to mourning,
and those skilled in lamentation, to wailing;

17 in all the vineyards there shall be wailing,
for I will pass through the midst of you,
says the LORD.

DEVOTIONAL

Recently a short home video went viral. A father was questioning his toddler daughter about why she had painted her Barbie doll (and the carpet!) with blue nail polish. The little girl claimed that Barbie told her to do it, and she tried so hard to resist. But Barbie “said ‘yes,’ one hundred times, Barbie said ‘yes!’” This video reminded me of the many voices clamoring for our attention—especially at this time of year. “Buy this; you need it.” “Give this to make them happy.” “It’s expensive, but you’re worth it.” “The biggest sale of the season!” Spend your way to a joyous Christmas. The voices say “yes,” 100 times they say “yes!” It can be hard to resist.

The prophet Amos warns of the destructive powers of consumerism and self-interest that cause us to “push aside the needy in the gate.” But Jesus has moved into the neighborhood, and we can no longer pretend that the only voice we hear is Barbie’s.

PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, Jesus has shown us the way of service to the least and the lost. Quiet the clamor around us that we might attend to those long-silenced and “establish justice in the gate.” Amen.

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